

Appl. No. : 09/817,535
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PROVISIONAL DRAFT OF CLAIM AMENDMENTS

1. (presently amended) A computer-assisted method of facilitating a just-in-time transfer of purchases to consumers, the method comprising:

on a computer system, for each of a plurality of consumers, associating a plurality of items ordered by the consumer from a plurality of merchants;

for each consumer, identifying a single geographic location from which the associated items will be transferred to the consumer and a time for the transfer;

on a computer system, for each of the plurality of merchants, estimating a transportation time for each of the plurality of items ordered by the consumer from the merchant to be transported to the location;

on a computer system, for each of the plurality of merchants, based at least on the estimated transportation time and the selected time for transfer, coordinating the shipping of each item from the point of origin to the location to ensure that all the associated items arrive at the location within a pre-specified time window preceding the selected time for transfer by a pre-specified time segment;

for each consumer, receiving the associated items at ~~the a single geographic~~ location;

for each consumer, based at least on the association of the items on the computer system, physically aggregating the items at the location; and

for each consumer, transferring the aggregated items to the consumer.

2. (previously amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein each of the purchased items is a product or comprises one or more products.

3. (previously amended) The method of Claim 1, further comprising

on the computer system, for each consumer, receiving notification of a pending delivery of at least one of the items to the location.

4. (previously amended) The method of Claim 1, further comprising

using the computer system, for each consumer, notifying the consumer that some or all of the plurality of items have been received at the location.

5. (canceled)

6. (previously amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein transferring the aggregated items to the consumer comprises sending the items to the consumer from the location.

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7. (presently amended) A computer-assisted method of facilitating the a just-in-time transfer of products to consumers, the method comprising:

on a computer system, identifying a plurality of consumers merchants and for each consumer merchant:

for each of a plurality of merchants consumers, identifying an a set of at least one item purchased by the consumer from the merchant;

presenting to the each consumer a set of at least one predetermined geographic locations from which set the each consumer is prompted to make a selection;

receiving from the each consumer a selection of a single geographic location from the set;

~~instructing each of the merchants to send the at least one item to the geographic location selected by the consumer;~~

~~at the geographic location selected by the consumer, receiving the set of at least one item sent by each of the merchants;~~

~~at the geographic location, aggregating the items sent by each of the merchants; and~~

~~transferring the aggregated items to the consumer.~~

prompting each consumer to indicate a date and time when the consumer wishes to receive the purchased items;

for each merchant, associating the items purchased by the plurality of consumers from the merchant in groups with a same geographic location;

on a computer system, for each merchant, estimating the transportation time to send the items in each group to the corresponding geographic location;

for each merchant, associating the items in each group in sub-groups for which the date and time for the receipt of the items is within a first time segment;

instructing each of the merchants to send the items in each sub-group to the corresponding geographic location in accordance with a schedule whereby the items arrive at the corresponding geographic location within a pre-specified time window which precedes the first time segment by a second time segment;

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at the geographic location, receiving the items in each sub-group sent by each of the merchants;

at the geographic location, for each consumer aggregating the items sent by each of the merchants; and

transferring the aggregated items to each of the corresponding consumers.

8. (previously amended) The method of Claim 7, wherein each of the purchased items is a product or comprises one or more products.

9. (previously amended) The method of Claim 7, wherein the selected geographic location is an order aggregation site.

10. (previously amended) The method of Claim 9, further comprising providing an identification of the items to the order aggregation site.

11. (previously amended) The method of Claim 9, further comprising instructing the order aggregation site to aggregate the items.

12. (original) The method of Claim 11, further comprising instructing the order aggregation site to transfer the aggregated items to the consumer.

13. (original) The method of Claim 11, further comprising instructing the order aggregation site to deliver the aggregated items to the consumer.

14. (original) The method of Claim 11, further comprising instructing a delivery service to pick up the aggregated items at the order aggregation site and to deliver the aggregated items to the consumer.

15. (canceled)

16. (previously amended) The method of Claim 7, further comprising instructing the consumer to receive the items at the selected geographic location.

17. (canceled)

18. (canceled)

19. (presently amended) The method of Claim 1, wherein the geographic location comprises:

a set of temporary bulk storage facilities that provide a selection of appropriate environments to temporarily store products;

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an order aggregation facility where products picked from the temporary bulk storage facilities can be physically aggregated;

loading and unloading docks for trucks to deliver and pick up shipments; a recipient vehicle loading and unloading facility for transferring items to consumers;

a communications system configured to electronically communicate with merchants and consumers; and

a computing system configured to coordinate the just-in time transfers of items from merchants to consumers.

20. (new) The method of Claim 1 wherein the time for the transfer comprises a date.

21. (new) The method of Claim 20 wherein the time for the transfer further comprises a time of day.

22. (new) The method of Claim 1 wherein the time for the transfer comprises a time window.